United Nations A/49/PV.66

General Assembly
Forty-ninth Session

Official Records

66th Meeting
Wednesday, 23 November 1994, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte d'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Agenda item 37 *(continued)*

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

(i) Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/177 and Corr.1 and Add.1)

(ii) Draft resolution (A/49/L.19)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

(i) Reports of the Secretary-General (A/49/158, A/49/263 and Corr.1, A/49/356, A//49/376, A/49/387 and Corr.1, A/49/388, A/49/396, A/49/397, A/49/431, A/49/456, A/49/466, A/49/470, A/49/516, A/49/562, A/49/581, A/49/683)

(ii) Draft resolutions (A/49/L.26, A/49/L.28, A/49/L.30, A/49/L.31, A/49/L.32, A/49/L.34, A/49/L.36)

(c) International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

(i) Note by the Secretary-General (A/49/453)

(ii) Report of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction (A/CONF.172/9 and Add.1)

(iii) Draft resolutions (A/49/L.21, A/49/L.29)

(d) International cooperation to mitigate the environmental consequences on Kuwait and other countries in the region resulting from the situation between Iraq and Kuwait: report of the Secretary-General (A/49/207 and Corr.1)

(f) Emergency international assistance for a solution to the problem of refugees, the restoration of total peace, reconstruction and socio-economic development in war-stricken Rwanda: draft resolution (A/49/L.24/Rev.1)

(g) Special assistance to countries receiving refugees from Rwanda: draft resolution (A/49/L.17/Rev.1)

Mr. Owada (Japan): The international community is now facing an enormous challenge as it attempts to respond to the dramatic increase in humanitarian emergencies that have been taking place since the end of the cold war. It is discouraging in the extreme that the end of the East-West confrontation has not led to a more peaceful and stable world, but instead brought about a proliferation of regional conflicts resulting from the outbreak of ethnic strife that had been contained under

94-87204 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Section, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum. When the result of a recorded and/or roll-call vote is followed by an asterisk, see annex to the record.

old regimes, such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the former Yugoslavia and in the Caucasus region of the former Soviet Union. Civil strife likewise has intensified and grown more complex in the past few years, particularly in such African nations as Liberia, Somalia, Angola and Rwanda. The international community has had to struggle with an attempt to respond in a timely and effective manner.

In this turbulent situation it is imperative for the humanitarian organizations to strengthen coordination and cooperation in their work for coping with these emergencies, all of which have complex political, social, economic, security and humanitarian dimensions. While acknowledging that the humanitarian organizations of the United Nations system, other humanitarian entities and non-governmental organizations have been making the best efforts to enhance their capacity for timely action in a coordinated manner, my delegation feels that they have now been pushed to the point where they are no longer capable of coping with the situation without introducing a more effective system of coordination and cooperation, against the background of a continuing rapid increase in the magnitude and scope of these crises.

Under the circumstances, the international community must urgently find ways and means of tackling this problem, which is well on its way to spinning out of control.

My delegation appreciates the efforts that the Emergency Relief Coordinator, with the support of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, is making to strengthen coordination among all humanitarian organizations. In particular, it recognizes the important role being played by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in launching the interagency consolidated appeal.

Admittedly, the task of the Emergency Relief Coordinator is not an easy one. My delegation believes that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs can play its role more effectively as coordinator among operational agencies by focusing on the task of sorting out their respective responsibilities at the field level of these operational agencies, especially at the initial stage of these complex emergencies. At the same time, it will be important that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs recognize the respective mandate of each of the operational agencies, and exercise caution in not delaying the process for the sake of a quick response to be undertaken by these agencies. The reorganization of the Department that is currently under way should also be geared towards contributing to this end, as the purpose of such a reorganization should be to facilitate a system-wide response to such complex emergencies.

Japan also wishes to emphasize the need to further develop and strengthen cooperation between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and other departments of the Secretariat, notably the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations. The Emergency Relief Coordinator needs to strengthen his advocacy role in the planning of United Nations responses to emergencies in order to ensure that the principles of humanitarian assistance are taken fully into account.

My delegation would also like to see the Inter-Agency Standing Committee reinforce its function as the primary mechanism for interagency coordination under the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee should also look into the area of so-called homeless issues, such as the question of the treatment of internally displaced persons, the issue of assistance in mine-clearance activities, and the problem of the continuum from emergency relief to rehabilitation. Especially on the problem of the continuum from emergency relief to rehabilitation and reconstruction, it would seem important for the United Nations system as a whole to plan a comprehensive policy and a strategy for the post-emergency period in a given situation, so that the momentum for multilateral cooperation generated by actions to cope with an emergency situation may be sustained and developed into the stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction. In this respect, my delegation appreciates the fact that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee task force has developed guidelines for an operational framework which aims at enhancing the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to the requirements of the transition from relief to rehabilitation and development. I hope that these guidelines will be further elaborated so that it will be possible to translate them into practical actions at the country level.

With regard to the development of an emergency information system and an early-warning system on emergencies, as stressed by the General Assembly in its resolutions 46/182 and 48/57, Japan takes note of the efforts made so far by various agencies in this field and earnestly hopes that those mechanisms are going to be further developed, so that an improved level of coordination in the response to emergencies may be achieved in such areas as preparedness, contingency planning and appropriate preventive humanitarian action.

My delegation has read with great interest the comprehensive report prepared by the Secretary-General in response to the request for additional information on the problem of rapid-response coordination and on the shortcomings in the functioning of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund. My delegation is of the view that in principle a procedure by which a humanitarian coordinator will be designated from among the most qualified persons representing the various humanitarian agencies involved in a given situation, including the Resident Coordinators, will be most feasible and effective at the field level. It is the strong hope of my delegation that these procedures will be implemented as soon as possible. With regard to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, my delegation agrees with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee that it serves a useful function, especially in enhancing the Organization's capacity to respond quickly to a complex emergency situation. While we are very much concerned about the falling level of resources of the Fund, we are firmly of the opinion that merely increasing the size of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund will not lead to a long-term resolution of the fundamental problem of the Fund, namely, the fact that it is functioning less and less as a revolving fund. With a view to finding ways to cope with this situation, my delegation would like to request the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to provide us with a long-term plan for improving the functioning of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund before increasing its size.

As to the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for continuing the arrangement for financing rapid-response coordination from the interest earned by the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, Japan has no objection and supports the continued use of the interest earned by the Central Emergency Revolving Fund to enhance rapid-response coordination, such as the dispatch of joint emergency-needs-assessment missions.

Japan has been doing its utmost to alleviate the suffering of people around the world, whether the situation involves a complex emergency or a natural disaster. Thus, my Government has been providing humanitarian assistance for refugees or internally displaced persons, either through humanitarian agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) or on a bilateral basis. Last year, assistance from the Japanese Government went to such diverse countries as Azerbaijan, Liberia, the Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Madagascar, Uganda and Mozambique. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the intention of Japan to continue to intensify such humanitarian assistance in the future.

With regard to the situation in Rwanda, my Government considers the tragedy there to be one of the biggest humanitarian issues the international community has to tackle. My Government is cooperating fully with the international community in providing Rwandan refugees and displaced persons with humanitarian assistance as well as in facilitating the creation of a favourable environment for the early repatriation of refugees.

The Government of Japan will also try its best to assist the new Government in Kigali in its efforts to help its people out of misery, and has been providing it with emergency humanitarian assistance, including the provision of food and the supply of medicine through relevant international humanitarian organizations.

Finally, let me turn to agenda item 37 (c), "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction", and offer some comments of my delegation in this regard. The initiative taken by Japan in cooperation with the Group of 77 on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction was motivated by the recognition that reduction of natural disasters is a crucial element in our overall effort to secure favourable conditions for development.

It is important that the international community continue to devote attention to this issue, which tends to be forgotten in the midst of more immediate day-to-day needs, because natural disasters characteristically occur unexpectedly and cause heavy damage. We must always be vigilant in order to prevent, mitigate and prepare for natural disasters.

My delegation believes that, ultimately, the success of the Decade will depend on the successful implementation of the Plan of Action adopted at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction held in Yokohama City in May of this year. I earnestly hope that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution submitted by the Economic and Social Council, which endorses the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World, and in particular its Plan of Action.

The Plan of Action identifies specific actions to be taken at the community and national levels, the subregional and regional levels and the international

level. With respect to activities at the community and national levels, my delegation notes that all countries are called upon to incorporate the goal of disaster reduction in their socio-economic development planning, which, in my view, is very important in reducing vulnerability to disasters. At the subregional and regional levels, my delegation notes with satisfaction that the Plan of Action emphasizes the importance of promoting and strengthening cooperation in activities to prevent, reduce and mitigate disasters. My delegation is also pleased that among the activities at the international level are the provision of adequate support for the activities of the Decade, including those of the secretariat of the Decade, and the holding of a second world conference on natural disaster reduction by the year 2000 to review the accomplishments of the Decade.

Japan, for its part, intends to contribute even more vigorously than it has done in the past to the promotion of activities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Butler of Australia, for his statement summing up the informal consultations conducted on agenda item 37; we express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Peter Hansen, and to the Department for Humanitarian Affairs for their efforts over the past year in coordinating emergency humanitarian assistance.

The Chinese delegation takes a great interest in emergency humanitarian assistance. It also attaches great importance to and supports the coordinating role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in that area. In recent years, disasters of various kinds in the world have notably increased, causing heavy losses of life and property in afflicted countries and regions — developing countries in particular. The frequency and increasing number of humanitarian crises have on the one hand hampered the development of the developing countries and on the other hand led to the diversion of resources from development to emergency-disaster-relief assistance. The international community should pay attention to this trend and should make efforts to reverse it.

We are of the view that natural disasters are one of the factors that hinder economic development in the developing countries, a matter to which due attention should be given. However, we have noted with regret that in its disaster-relief assistance the United Nations focuses on man-made disasters, but does not pay enough attention to natural disasters.

There are over 50 million people in the world who need international assistance as a result of man-made disasters or other man-made factors. The United Nations should and must do what it can to help them. But, at the same time, there is also a huge number of people in need of assistance because of natural disasters. For instance, 21 million people in sub-Saharan countries are threatened by drought. We therefore believe that relief assistance for man-made and relief assistance for natural disasters are of equal importance. While strengthening its ability to respond rapidly to complex emergencies, the United Nations should also study how to strengthen its ability to respond quickly to natural disasters, especially sudden and severe ones. Moreover, attention should be given to post-disaster recovery and reconstruction so as to help the afflicted countries with their sustained development.

Thirdly, the shortfall of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund should be properly addressed. In the first place, efforts should be made to strengthen management. There is a Chinese proverb which says: "Use the best steel to make the knife's edge". In other words, scarce valuable resources should be used in disaster relief activities where they are most needed. In the second place, the size of the Fund should be appropriately enlarged.

Fourthly, the Chinese delegation supports the Yokohama Plan of Action and Strategy adopted at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction. We wish to inform the Assembly that, in response to the appeals made in these two documents, the Chinese Government is going to formulate a comprehensive national plan on natural disaster reduction, the main purpose of which is to prevent flood and drought and protect grain production and the environment. This plan will constitute an important component of the country's ninth five-year plan for development.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that greater efforts are required of the international community to turn the documents adopted at the Yokohama Conference into concrete action. The key to this lies in financial resources and technology. Ninety per cent of the world's natural disasters occur in the developing countries, whose economic foundations are weak and which have difficulty preventing and combating disasters. Therefore, the international community, and the developed countries in

particular, should increase financial assistance and transfer technologies relating to disaster reduction to the developing countries in order to help them better prevent and combat disasters. Only in this way can the objectives set out in the Yokohama Plan of Action and Strategy be achieved. Otherwise they will likely end up as idle theorizing.

China is a developing country in which 80 million people still live in poverty. China is also a country frequently hit by natural disasters. According to incomplete statistics, so far this year flooding has cost the lives of over 5,000 people and caused about $17 billion in damage. In spite of such severe natural disasters, China has provided food and medicine for Rwandan refugees through the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs and has offered disaster-relief assistance and special economic assistance, within its capacity to do so, to other countries through bilateral channels. In the future, China will continue to work with the international community for disaster prevention, reduction and relief throughout the world.

In conclusion, we wish to emphasize that it is an unshirkable duty of the international community to provide humanitarian assistance and special economic assistance to disaster-stricken countries. We hold that such assistance should continue to be humanitarian, neutral, fair and unconditional.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): It is indeed a sad reality that the global need for humanitarian emergency assistance is more urgent today than it has ever been. More than 30 million people in countries in Asia, Africa, the Caucasus, the former Yugoslavia and Central America are in dire need of emergency assistance. They are the unfortunate victims of the break-up of nations, ethnic and civil conflicts, of flagrant disregard for basic human rights and international humanitarian law and of devastating natural disasters. We deplore the toll which natural and man-made disasters have taken on human life and the particularly severe economic and social impact they have had in developing countries.

In the three years since we adopted resolution 46/182, and with it the establishment of new mechanisms for the United Nations system's response to emergencies, these new arrangements have been put under severe strain. There have been some remarkable successes as regards a comprehensive, timely and well-coordinated response to humanitarian emergencies. This demonstrates that, when there is the political will to place humanitarianism first, much can be achieved. The reverse, unfortunately, is also true: If there is no political will humanitarian assistance becomes difficult, if not impossible.

The discussion of the Secretary-General's report on the occasion of this year's substantive session of the Economic and Social Council showed that considerable progress towards a more systematic and coherent response to emergencies has been achieved, particularly as regards efforts at streamlining the new mechanisms and improving vertical and horizontal coordination. In this connection, we have noted that the players involved have made concerted efforts to enhance their capacities for timely and coordinated action, including an improved definition of their respective responsibilities and better analyses of emergency situations and needs assessments.

We have also noted that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has dealt with important issues, such as access to victims, security of personnel and relief supplies, humanitarian imperatives in conflict situations, internally displaced persons, de-mining, demobilization and the unintended impact of sanctions. As the mutual cooperation between United Nations agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the Department for Humanitarian Affairs progresses, thus leading to an improved overall performance, the intensified meetings between the Emergency Relief Coordinator and members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee will become ever-more important. The results of these consultations should be promptly disseminated, including to interested Governments.

We share the widely held belief that it must be the foremost objective of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to provide leadership on behalf of the Secretary-General and to function as facilitator and coordinator for the international community. This also means that the Coordinator and his Department must receive the fullest partnership cooperation from the other actors of the system. I should like at this stage to express our deep appreciation for the dedicated work done by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen.

Particularly in situations where political and humanitarian dimensions are interlinked, the relationship between humanitarian emergency assistance, political matters and peace-keeping are of critical importance. In these situations it is also necessary to safeguard the principles of the humanity, neutrality and impartiality of relief assistance.

As regards the all-important subject of strengthened field coordination of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies, the addendum to the Secretary-General's report contains useful information, including contemplated measures for the appointment of humanitarian coordinators.

As we have already observed, demands on the international community for emergency assistance have reached unprecedented levels. At the same time, capacities to meet them are overstretched and the resources for response are not unlimited.More attention will therefore have to be paid to cost-reducing measures in relief operations as well as to cost-avoidance through early warning, preventive diplomacy and preventive development.

While the Central Emergency Fund has proved its value as a revolving cash-flow instrument, we share the opinion that its operation could be improved by ensuring the timely repayment of funds advanced. In this connection we have noted from the addendum to the Secretary General's report that operational organizations have to turn to the Fund as their own emergency funds are

> "either limited, inadequate or depleted". *(A/49/177/Add.1, para. 57)*

In this connection a study of the complementarity of the various emergency resources seems to be called for.

Still on the subject of resources, we must be allowed to reiterate last year's invitation to the Secretary-General in resolution 48/57 to make a further examination of all possible ways and means to provide adequate qualified personnel and administrative resources commensurate with the heavy responsibilities of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Since almost 50 per cent of the Department's administrative costs are currently funded from extrabudgetary resources, this examination would appear to be urgent.

The Secretary-General's report once again shows that sudden-onset natural disasters and similar emergencies continue to be a major preoccupation for the international community. We concur that it must be the Department's primary objective to play a catalytic role in the promotion of disaster-mitigation strategies, that is, prevention and preparedness, particularly in developing countries.

In the framework of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction valuable work has already been accomplished, as is clearly reflected in the report on the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction. The Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World, together with the Plan of Action, certainly provides a further impetus to achieve the goals of the Decade.

In connection with rapid-response mechanisms to natural disasters, a number of initiatives have been developed which are now being adapted to complex emergency situations. As an active participant in the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Teams, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group and the Military and Civil Defense Assets Project, Austria welcomes this evolution. These response mechanisms could also be used in connection with the growing challenge of environmental emergencies.

Recent experience in complex emergencies has taught us that relief work has to be undertaken in increasingly dangerous environments. It is of the utmost importance that the safety of relief personnel should be appropriately secured. Measures already under consideration may have to be intensified even further.

I should like briefly to focus on a specific issue, which is also under consideration in this cluster and which concerns the economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions, in particular against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Austria was a sponsor of resolution 48/210, which was adopted at last year's session of the General Assembly, and we welcome the Secretary-General's report prepared for our consideration under this item. We are also a sponsor of this year's draft resolution.

In its statement in the Second Committee during last year's debate the Austrian delegation focused extensively on this issue. Sanctions have become an important tool against those who flout fundamental principles of international law. At the same time they are costly to members of the international community. The embargo disturbs trade links, leads to higher transport costs and difficult market situations and also damages the Danube transport system. Austria, although it is itself affected, is nevertheless firmly committed to the unwavering implementation of the said sanctions as long as necessary.

A number of States neighbouring Serbia and Montenegro, and other States as well, are incurring particular economic hardship as a consequence of their implementation of the sanctions. We would like to commend those States for their ongoing commitment to

the strict application of the embargo. In Austria's view, the deliberations under this agenda item will be a further way to pledge support to the States most affected.

In conclusion, may I be permitted to thank delegations for their kind words referring to the role with which you, Mr. President, have entrusted me in accordance with resolution 48/162, to coordinate the draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 37. I will of course do my best, in cooperation with all interested delegations, to live up to expectations. I am confident that during this process we will very soon be able to identify the large number of draft resolutions that already enjoy consensus in the Assembly and that, further, we will also arrive as soon as possible at genuine agreement on those drafts that might require further negotiations. I do hope that the consultation process, as introduced by last year's resolution, will be seen as a step towards a more comprehensive approach to be taken by the General Assembly with regard to individual draft resolutions under agenda item 37.

Mr. Karsgaard (Canada): This past year has seen a dramatic increase in emergency situations caused by man-made conflicts and natural catastrophes. Although an enormous price has been paid in human lives and material damage during these crises, an even higher price may have been paid afterward. Thirty million people in more than 29 countries urgently need immediate assistance.

However, emergency assistance is not the only challenge. At times an even more difficult challenge is to re-establish the basic components for the minimal functioning of a society. Too often, a vicious cycle of extreme poverty and the denial of basic rights becomes a source of internal conflict and leads to the disruption, if not the complete breakdown, of society. For this reason, we see a need to integrate the security, political and humanitarian dimensions of emergency assistance. There is also an urgent need to strengthen an effective humanitarian response as well as to promote greater cooperation among emergency-assistance organizations.

Canada is the first to recognize that the response of the United Nations system to this challenge has greatly improved over the past few years. Much of the credit for this goes to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Peter Hansen, and to his staff. The role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is now widely understood and accepted. The usefulness of the tools made available to the Department has been demonstrated. Consolidated appeals have become one of the essential coordinating tools and the preferred channel through which the donor community responds.

Judging by the frequency with which various operators use it, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund has proved its usefulness. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee meets more frequently and has looked after so-called orphan issues, involving problems related to minesweeping, demobilization, displaced persons and the continuum from emergency to development.

Finally, in the Secretariat itself, the Department has taken important steps towards improving the division of work between Secretariat units in Geneva and in New York.

These adjustments will help to make the Department the centre of effective coordination of emergency assistance and a real example of value-added services, as compared to the individual action of each stakeholder. The initiatives approved to date, however, must be interpreted only as a step in a continuous process of readjusting to the realities in the field and to the requirements of increasingly complex crises.

(spoke in French)

Despite this noteworthy progress, Canada has begun promoting other improvements that relate mainly to the system's "rapid response" capabilities. For this rapid response to be effective, it must be based on three basic prerequisites: the appointment of a humanitarian coordinator in the field; inter-agency cooperation in the initial phase of the emergency; and the ability to rely on an emergency fund that is not hindered by the level of assets and delays in reimbursement. When resolution 48/57 was adopted, and during the Economic and Social Council's deliberations last summer, we strongly urged that a solution be found for these shortcomings.

We are pleased that these issues are meeting with the degree of positive response that the Emergency Coordinator notes in his report. We congratulate him on the efforts that have been made. The appointment of the Field Humanitarian Coordinator was the subject of a unanimous inter-agency agreement. This agreement states that the resident Coordinator will normally be the incumbent; otherwise, the Assistant Secretary-General will have the flexibility to designate a person with the necessary expertise from a previously approved list of experts. We hope that the logic and clarity of this agreement will ensure its effectiveness.

Rapid response depends also on close cooperation between agencies during the initial phase of the emergency. It assumes that the agency that occupies the predominant position in the field must be able to provide a certain degree of leadership. In other situations, plans must be made to dispatch an inter-agency team to the field to ensure an initial evaluation of needs. In all specific cases, we should expect agencies fully to support the coordinating activities of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in terms of the personnel and means required. We encourage Member States to stress this requirement — for instance, at meetings of the executive boards of the agencies concerned.

(spoke in English)

Everyone will agree that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund lies at the heart of the ability to respond rapidly. Its use on 33 occasions for a total of $103 million bears witness, at the very least, to the need for a fund initially endowed with $50 million. Indeed, the crisis in Rwanda rekindled debate as to whether the level of this fund was sufficient at a time when barely $5 million remained available in it.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Is the level of available resources a problem? Is red tape complicating their use and reimbursement? Are donors slow to respond to consolidated appeals? All of these are, no doubt, factors contributing to the problem.

There is no doubt in our minds that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should be more selective in terms of the admissibility of requests that are submitted. These requests should meet the criteria of an "absolute emergency" and should meet the test of likely reimbursement by donors.

For their part, donors should respond promptly to consolidated appeals and provide an untied share of their grants to allow agencies to give priority to repaying the costs associated with rapid response. Within the consolidated appeal itself, an appropriate section should cover this item.

An increase in the fund must be considered if these measures prove to be insufficient. After all, there is obviously no obstacle to replenishing a voluntary fund. There may be the problem of a "floor", but certainly not of a "ceiling". Potential donors should be canvassed to determine whether they are in a position to give.

However, there are other possible solutions to the cash-flow problem. Others have suggested measures that would provide for even greater selectivity, as well as an accelerated response to appeals. In-kind contributions have also been suggested as another approach. These possible solutions share a common objective: to maintain the Central Emergency Revolving Fund's feature as an emergency fund and as a last recourse when other means are, in fact, unavailable.

We have therefore invited the humanitarian Coordinator to examine these questions further, and we encourage him to continue the consultative process launched in response to resolution 48/57.

Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe): I should like, at the outset, to express Zimbabwe's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. We have found it to be concise and informative, and it allows us to take stock of the state of implementation of General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 48/57. My delegation associates itself fully with the statement on this item made this morning by the Chairman of the Group of 77.

Zimbabwe is greatly concerned at the increasing number and the growing magnitude of humanitarian emergencies, which include natural disasters as well as so-called complex emergencies. As the report before us points out, more than 30 million people in 29 countries are in urgent need of emergency assistance. More than 20 million people in Africa are threatened by a severe drought, further exacerbating the suffering of the victims of civil strife in many parts of the continent. We are fully cognizant of the heavy toll, in human and material terms, that these crises take on the affected countries and of the obstacles that they create in their development efforts.

The adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 46/182 in December 1991 was a milestone in our quest to improve the response of the United Nations system and other international players to natural disasters and other emergencies. We are pleased that, since the adoption of that resolution, coordination of the humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations has been further strengthened, with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, playing a central role in

this process. The General Assembly, by that resolution, provided the United Nations with the necessary set of instruments for a coherent and timely response to humanitarian emergencies. Substantial progress has been made in the functioning of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the effective utilization of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and the launching of the consolidated appeals. May I express our appreciation for the work done so far in implementing this resolution by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, under the leadership of Mr. Peter Hansen, and before him, Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden.

Zimbabwe attaches great importance to the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee as the primary mechanism within the United Nations for the inter-agency coordination of policy and strategic issues related to humanitarian assistance. The participation in the work of the Standing Committee by such organizations as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Organization for Migration is also important in this process. We appreciate the work that the Standing Committee has done with regard, among other things, to the guidelines on the consolidated appeals process. We welcome the focus of the Standing Committee this year on such important areas as resource mobilization; support for field coordination, the humanitarian aspect of sanctions; demining; and the transition from relief to development. We also share the view of Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen, as expressed before the Economic and Social Council on 13 July 1994, that relief organizations could benefit from a more systematic dialogue with Governments, including donors, on coordination issues relating to bilateral and multilateral assistance, as well as on a global overview to identify and address gaps in resources or programmes. We are interested in knowing the results of consultations in the Standing Committee in this regard.

We have noted from the Secretary-General's report that arrangements are underway for consultations between the Emergency Relief Coordinator and those responsible for the planning of peace-keeping operations in order to take into account the humanitarian component contained in these operations. We agree, of course, that so-called complex emergencies which include military interventions and peace-keeping operations should be the subject of the attention of the General Assembly. We believe, however, that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should operate in accordance with the mandate conferred upon it by resolution 46/182, and in particular the need to ensure that the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality are strictly observed. We believe that all victims of disasters, be they natural or man-made, deserve to be assisted by the international community in a generous and timely manner in keeping with the spirit of international humanitarian law.

Another important tool provided to the United Nations by resolution 46/182 is the consolidated appeals mechanism. We are pleased that the inter-agency consolidated appeals have progressively become more integrated and comprehensive. We welcome the increased involvement of non-governmental organizations at the field level in the appeals process and, in that regard, would wish to commend the Government of Sweden for its assistance in the creation of a United Nations Fund to facilitate non-governmental organizations' activities in this area. We also call on the donor community to respond in a more timely manner to the consolidated appeals, particularly as we note the increasing shortfall between funding requirements and funding actually received. We are also concerned over the general pattern of under-funding of non-food requirements, as well as the shortage of untied food resources. These are problems which continue to persist, as we pointed out in our statement before the Assembly last year.

As the report of the Secretary-General shows, utilization of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) by the United Nations agencies has been increasing quite rapidly. In accordance with resolution 46/182, the Fund was established at a level of $50 million and has so far disbursed some $103 million, of which $76 million has been reimbursed. The particular usefulness of the Fund has been recognized by all, particularly the operational agencies themselves. The need for a substantial increase in the resources of the Fund has become more imperative, as has the need to preserve its revolving nature, particularly through timely reimbursement from the agencies.

Zimbabwe attaches great importance to the continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development. We believe that there is a close relationship between emergency operations and the development process, and that humanitarian assistance should be placed firmly in the developmental context. In this regard, we fully support the view that the United Nations agencies and the donor community, while providing emergency assistance, should also focus on the rehabilitation and long-term development needs of disaster-stricken countries.

Mr. Lukabu Khabouji N'zaji (Zaire) *(interpretation from French):* I should like most sincerely to thank the Secretary-General for his very concise report submitted to us under agenda item 37, which we are now discussing. By the same token, I should like to commend the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Hansen, for the praiseworthy initiatives he has taken in order to come to the assistance of those peoples and regions in distress.

My statement will concentrate on sub-item (g) of agenda item 37, entitled "Special assistance to countries receiving refugees from Rwanda". The Chairman of the African Group this morning very eloquently introduced to the Assembly draft resolution A/49/L.17/Rev.1, and I am grateful to him for that.

We would like to express our gratitude to all those countries that have declared their intention to join us as sponsors of this draft resolution but which have not been able to do so in practice owing to lack of time. We would also like to convey our thanks to the European Union, which has helped us to improve upon the text, and we hope that a new version that takes account of these remarks will be available when the draft resolution comes up for adoption.

I should like now to turn to the concerns addressed in the draft resolution before the Assembly. On 5 October last, speaking from this rostrum, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Zaire, His Excellency Mr. Kengo Wa Dondo, expressed the main concerns of the host countries for Rwandese refugees when he said:

> "Millions of Rwandese left their country and took refuge in neighbouring countries. This mass exodus caused immeasurable damage and created extremely serious social and economic imbalances in those countries ... The little city of Goma, with a normal population of 200,000, on 14 June alone took in 10,000 refugees a minute. The modern world has never seen such an uprooting of population.
>
> "The effects of such a situation could only be tragic: the swamping of infrastructures, the re-emergence of endemic disease, housing shortages, the devastation of crops, environmental destruction, disputes among people living in close quarters, insecurity, and countless other examples." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 18th meeting, p. 15).*

He added:

> "The current situation in countries bordering on Rwanda meets all the preconditions for preventive intervention by the international community." *(ibid., p. 16)*

That is why, aware of the difficulties encountered by the countries hosting refugees in meeting the needs of their local populations, we have introduced this sub-item, so as to emphasize the special nature of the situation faced by these countries. Through the draft resolution, we express our gratitude to the international community for what it has done, and continues to do, for refugees. However, it should not forget the local populations, which, in the most tragic hours of the Rwandese drama, when international assistance was being organized, themselves shared everything they had with their Rwandese brothers and sisters. Now that they themselves are now also needy, they deserve particular attention from the international community. Their crops have been either destroyed or harvested without any replacement; their cupboards are empty; famine is near; and epidemics have decimated the ranks of both refugees and the local populations, who have given all they had to their Rwandese brothers and sisters, including their last remaining spare beds. We ask the General Assembly to recall that these are the least developed of the developing countries whose infrastructures could never absorb such a human tide.

We express our deepest gratitude to all the countries and humanitarian organizations that have helped, and continue to help, my country, Zaire, to shoulder the burden of this responsibility that has been imposed on it by history and geography. We would like to emphasize that special and increased assistance should be given to Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania and Zaire so as to enable them to restore basic services in the areas hosting refugees.

In conclusion, I should like, as Chairman of the Group of African States, to request members to adopt by consensus the draft resolution introduced this morning — one which is strictly humanitarian.

Mr. Katende (Uganda): I have the honour to make the following statement of behalf of Ambassador Kamunanwire, Permanent Representative of Uganda.

The cluster of items on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance to individual countries or regions, is of

significant interest to my delegation. I join previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General for all his comprehensive reports under consideration. My delegation supports the statement made by the Chairman of the Group of 77, who spoke on our behalf.

Issues of natural disasters, special programme assistance to distressed countries and issues of emergency humanitarian assistance are indeed one of today's greatest challenges to the United Nations and the international community, both in scale and diversity. In the case of my country, as we grapple with the many manifestations of socio-economic development, we continue to experience impediments as a result of our limited capacity to cope with a multitude of exogenous adverse factors. Uganda has one of the lowest per-capita incomes of the developing countries, and by all accounts we experience one of the lowest standards of living. The excruciating external indebtedness, *inter alia*, remains a major impediment to our development. Debt servicing alone is estimated at over 60 per cent of export receipts.

Other indicators point to a complex situation. In the area of natural disasters, Uganda experienced at the beginning of this year a major earthquake in the south-western part of the country. The earthquake, which measured 5.9 on the Richter scale, claimed a number of lives and destroyed property, including public infrastructure. Our lakes, including the second-largest freshwater mass in the world — Lake Victoria — are being threatened by the encroaching water hyacinth. The plant is progressively engulfing the lakes to the extent that the survival of marine life and of the fishing industry and water navigation in the subregion are at stake. Some of that marine life, especially in Lake Victoria, is on the list of endangered species.

The question of refugees and displaced persons presents yet another disaster of a different kind, which demands new and more innovative responses. Despite our economic difficulties, Uganda continues to receive and host a large number of refugees. This has meant a competition for already scarce resources between the refugees and the local populations. The influx of refugees has also had an effect on the environment as they fend for sources of energy, shelter and food. In this light, it is our view that the scope of humanitarian assistance should be widened to address the problems posed for the host populations.

All the above problems and others are not unique to Uganda. As has been alluded to in this Assembly, these predicaments are shared by many developing countries, especially those in Africa. Therefore, as we express appreciation for all the bilateral and multilateral assistance being extended to us in the many areas of economic and emergency activities, we continue to count on the larger international community in complementing our efforts.

Emergency assistance need not be a form of support designed to last forever. Of paramount importance is economic assistance that should enable greater economic advances by creating development-friendly framework conditions and the unlimited possibility for people to develop themselves. The huge organizational flaws of multilateral cooperation make radical reform urgently necessary. The agencies of the United Nations dealing with emergencies and development cooperation need to be streamlined not only to achieve more efficiency but also to cut back a proliferating bureaucracy. The money saved should be used for programme activities.

In all the related decisions, the inputs of the affected countries or regions are pertinent. Multilateral cooperation should therefore make greater use of local know-how in the planning and implementation of programmes and projects. The involvement of local experts and recipient Governments in project responsibility leads to more efficiency and sustainability, as well as being cost-effective.

The need for greater commitment in financing multilateral cooperation in emergency humanitarian assistance and the contribution to development is equally crucial. Inadequate funding often renders the successful implementation of projects difficult. My delegation notes the current imbalances in resource flows between peace-keeping activities by the United Nations on the one hand and humanitarian aid, disaster relief and development activities on the other. The United Nations spends far more for peace-keeping operations than it does for development assistance. This trend means losing sight of the fact that a number of conflicts have roots in socio-economic impoverishment.

If my delegation attaches great importance to special economic assistance and focused emergency responsiveness for wider self-propelling development, it is because perpetual stopgap measures in the end undermine the consolidation of the continuum to economic recovery and reconstruction in weak economies. What is required are adequate economic-resource mobilization and flows, as well as strengthened internal capacities for sustainable development.

Uganda is one of the countries that invoked Article 50 of the United Nations Charter as a result of implementing sanctions imposed against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). As stated in the Secretary General's report in document A/49/356, my country requested assistance related to the interruption of a contract that had been concluded in 1987 between the Government of Uganda and a private Yugoslav firm, Energoprojekt, for the construction of the Mityana-Fort Portal road in western Uganda. At the time of the imposition of the sanctions, the road construction project had been halfway completed at Mubende, where it is still stalled due to non-payment under the sanctions regime. Given the vital importance of the road to Uganda's economy, the interruption of the project has delayed the improvement that we had intended. Construction remains at a halt, with the resultant associated costs, including the maintenance of idle machinery, consultancy services and litigation expenses.

My delegation notes that the Security Council, its Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991) and its Working Group on Article 50 remain seized of the matter. We express appreciation for all the existing mechanisms and ongoing programmes of technical and financial assistance in the country, at the bilateral and multilateral levels. However, we feel strongly that the implementation of Article 50 remains vague. It should be effectively implemented. Therefore, to overcome any ambiguities, it is important that there be a mechanism in the United Nations to address the spirit of Article 50 effectively and systematically. In this regard, current discussions on the issue should be further encouraged, including discussion of a well-established methodology for the assessment of the economic impact of sanctions on affected countries.

Whereas special assistance measures have indirect positive effects, they are not directly aimed at mitigating the negative consequences of the sanctions. Moreover, existing programmes, in the case of my country, are being undertaken within a pool of other priorities. It is thus difficult for us to notice whether there is any substantial difference in the extent to which the effects of the sanctions are being mitigated.

Regarding Uganda's project stalled as a result of sanctions, we continue to find it difficult to get new contractors on similar terms, a problem which compounds the ongoing costs already mentioned. Since it is a priority project aimed at mitigating the larger economic hardships of people in a productive part of the country, our humble appeal is that urgent additional assistance be focused on the project itself. In this respect, we commend the Economic Commission for Africa for sending an evaluation team to Uganda earlier this year with a view to recommending alternative sources of funding. We look forward to a favourable report. Equally, my country welcomes the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development Consultative Group meetings scheduled for 1995 and is optimistic that additional and specifically focused resources to mitigate the losses and costs suffered as a result of sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be mobilized.

In conclusion, my delegation has co-sponsored a number of draft resolutions on the item under consideration. It is our hope that they will be adopted by consensus and implemented accordingly, including their wider elements.

Mr. Maycock (Barbados): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 12 States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which are Members of the United Nations — namely, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, Barbados — as well as on behalf of Suriname, on agenda item 37, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance."

The CARICOM countries and Suriname thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive information provided on sub-item (a) in documents A/49/177 and Add 1. These reports are testimony to the commendable progress that has been made, in increasingly challenging circumstances, to strengthen coordination and cooperation between the organizations of the United Nations system and other governmental and non-governmental partners in the area of humanitarian assistance. In particular, we welcome the progressive evolution of the principal policy-coordination mechanism, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, as well as the consolidated appeals process and the Central Emergency Revolving Fund. We have taken careful note of the Standing Committee's recommendation for an increase in the size of the Fund to better enable it to fulfil its purpose and of the intention to conduct additional consultations with all parties concerned in this regard.

Our Governments acknowledge with considerable interest the important ongoing work in database and

information compilation in a variety of critical areas, including the International Emergency Readiness and Response Information System, the Humanitarian Early Warning System, the de-mining database and the Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities. We know from first-hand experience the vital role that timely and accurate information plays at all stages of a humanitarian emergency, and we anticipate the development of close collaboration between the United Nations and our Governments in this regard in areas relevant to our own circumstances.

The significant number of individual country and regional reports which have been presented to us under other sub-items in this cluster demonstrate in graphic terms the overwhelming proportions of the humanitarian tragedy now facing the international community. In a few situations, commendable progress has been made, which is deserving of our sustained support; this is true of the efforts to consolidate peace and democracy in Central America. But, in overall terms, humanitarian crises, and in particular those classified as complex humanitarian emergencies, are increasing at an alarming rate. Their scope and magnitude have severely taxed the response capacities of the United Nations system, of concerned intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and of the international community as a whole. War and civil strife continue to produce catastrophic suffering and displacement for millions of innocent civilians worldwide and to generate the need for urgent and large-scale humanitarian assistance. Meanwhile, the delivery of such assistance remains fraught with serious problems relating to access, security and resource constraints. The dedicated United Nations and international and non-governmental personnel that puts its life at risk on a daily basis to respond to this growing human tragedy deserves our recognition and support. For we must remind ourselves that it is frequently the efforts of that personnel, and not those of the cloistered negotiators in these halls, which redeem the image of the United Nations in the public's eye and provide its firmest base of support among the citizens of the world.

The peaceful democracies of the Caribbean have happily been spared the ravages of war and major civil strife. Geography, however, has exposed some of us indirectly to its consequences, as accidental havens for the desperate exodus of displaced and persecuted persons from neighbouring shores. In the Bahamas, for example, 40,000 of the region's dispossessed, the majority originating from Haiti, are now present in its territory. While these numbers may appear small in terms of the overall global phenomenon, they in fact represent, in the case of the Bahamas, virtually one-fifth of the total population, making their impact perhaps more devastating, proportionately, to the affected country. With negligible assistance or recognition from the international community, the Bahamas, a small island developing State, has had to make humanitarian provisions for these migrants, with heavy adverse effects on its own economic and social development efforts.

The sister State of Belize is similarly affected. Belize as a haven of tranquillity on the Central American mainland was sought as refuge by some 30,000 refugees and displaced persons fleeing conflict in a once turbulent region. This tremendous influx of immigrants now constitutes some 10 to 15 per cent of the population, resulting in severe strain on the provision of social services and on the infrastructure.

The central location of Jamaica has also exposed that country to this phenomenon and engendered a humanitarian response. Earlier this year, at the height of the exodus of Haitian boat people, the Government of Jamaica, out of humanitarian concern for their plight, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of the United States to allow for the operation of a processing facility within Jamaica's territorial waters. It also took action, in coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and with assistance from local humanitarian organizations and concerned nationals, to provide humanitarian assistance, including shelter, food, clothing and academic and vocational training, to those Haitians who had sought refuge within the country. Suriname has also honoured a request to provide a temporary safe haven for Haitian refugees and, to this end, has taken the necessary steps, in close cooperation with national and international humanitarian organizations.

The recent positive developments in Haiti leading to the restoration of President Aristide have created favourable conditions for the return of the Haitians to their homeland, and efforts in this regard are being undertaken by the affected Governments together with the UNHCR.

The CARICOM countries and Suriname consider it important to reiterate the sentiment expressed by the Secretary-General in his report last year, when he reminded us that droughts, floods, earthquakes and cyclones are just as destructive for communities and

settlements as wars and civil confrontation. The statistics in this year's report give us no cause for comfort, for they reveal that a total number of 68 natural disasters occurred in 1993, causing death to thousands and homelessness to millions, and billions of dollars in economic losses. The vast majority of countries affected were from the developing world, and virtually a third of them were island developing countries.

The extreme vulnerability of the Caribbean to natural disasters is demonstrated in the mounting catalogue of hurricanes, storms, floods, landslides and droughts that leave their annual trail of misery throughout our region. 1994 has been a year of extremes in this regard. On the one hand, we have experienced the most severe drought to visit the Caribbean in decades, which has had a significant adverse impact on the agricultural sectors of many of our countries and has caused a serious strain on already limited water resources. On the other hand, the period of drought has been followed in close succession by two tropical storms, "Debby" and "Gordon", which caused widespread damage, respectively, in Saint Lucia and in Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the Cayman Islands. In Saint Lucia tropical storm "Debby" caused four deaths and rendered 600 homeless, while the severe flooding and landslides it produced caused extensive infrastructural damage, particularly to roads, bridges and hospitals, and to the water distribution network. The agricultural, fisheries and forestry sectors were also seriously affected, with 58 per cent of the banana and 80 per cent of the coconut crops — both major foreign exchange earners — destroyed, and it is estimated that 12 to 18 months will be required to return to pre-disaster levels of production. High winds and torrential rains from tropical storm "Gordon" caused severe flooding and landslides in the affected countries and several hundred deaths, over 300 of them in Haiti, where 100,000 people were affected; damage assessments are still being compiled.

It is experiences like those which have led our region to give priority attention to the strengthening of national and regional institutions and mechanisms aimed at increasing the capabilities of our disaster-prone countries in preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. A comprehensive blueprint for action in this regard is provided in chapter II of the Programme of Action negotiated in Barbados in May this year by the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, through which the international community gave special recognition to the extreme vulnerability of small island developing States to the effects of natural and environmental disasters. Strong commitment and support at the international level, and by the United Nations agencies operating in the humanitarian assistance fields, are indispensable to the successful implementation of the important actions recommended in that chapter to address the special needs of this group of countries.

The CARICOM member States and Suriname are gratified that the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, held in Yokohama in May this year, took account of the recommendations of the Barbados Programme of Action, and accorded special consideration in the Yokohama Strategy to the particular situation of small island developing States. Our Governments participated actively in the World Conference and are fully supportive of its outcomes, as we are of the goals and activities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. The issues these complementary activities have sought to highlight are of direct relevance to the situations we face in the Caribbean region, and we look forward to cooperating closely with the Decade's secretariat in devising relevant programmes in respect of our region on the basis of the Yokohama Strategy.

CARICOM countries have a well-established tradition of regional cooperation in the area of disaster preparedness and response, and we therefore welcome the emphasis given in the Yokohama documents to the strengthening of subregional and regional centres for disaster reduction and prevention, and to the assigning of high priority and special support to activities and programmes at the subregional and regional levels in order to promote cooperation between countries exposed to the same risks.

In this regard, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), established by the Caribbean Community in 1991, is a tangible demonstration of our subregion's efforts to strengthen our institutional capacity for disaster management and response. CDERA has developed close links of cooperation with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its Resident Coordinator in Barbados, who chairs the Eastern Caribbean Disaster Donor Group, as well as with the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. It is, however, felt that the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and CDERA would further enhance that cooperation, as would the deployment by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of a subregional presence in the Caribbean.

The United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme has proved useful to the Caribbean, but would benefit further from the commitment of resources for the implementation of agreed action plans and for recommended follow-up of initial activities. Similarly, the UNDP regional project, the Disaster Emergency Response and Management System, is viewed by Caribbean Governments as an important effort at capacity-building in those two critical areas, and it is hoped that the approved funding to implement this project will be released at the earliest possible opportunity.

The CARICOM member States and Suriname wish to record their appreciation for the contributions made by a number of United Nations and regional agencies, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations in support of our own efforts to develop a comprehensive disaster management infrastructure to serve the countries of the subregion. The assistance of the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT), the Organization of American States and the Pan American Health Organization have been of considerable significance in this context. The Pan American Health Organization in particular has been collaborating closely with regional Governments since 1977, and has provided important advisory health services in the humanitarian field, as well as contributing to the capacity-building needs of the region through seminars, training workshops and public awareness efforts, and through the introduction of its Supply Management Project, designed to sort, classify and record an inventory of the large quantities of relief supplies received in post-disaster situations. A memorandum of understanding between the Pan American Health Organization and CDERA formalizes its designation as the health disaster response adviser to CDERA.

The coordinating role of CDERA in regional disaster management and response was successfully activated again this year in reaction to the onslaught of tropical storms "Debby" and "Gordon". Several important lessons were learned which will contribute to the strengthening of future procedures. In addition, over the past year CDERA has worked to refine its Relief Supply Tracking System, a software package introduced to participating States in 1993, and has coordinated several important activities in community disaster planning, shelter management, and enhancement of the development of disaster exercises and simulation capability within member States. Caribbean Governments wish to record their appreciation for the funding of and support for these activities provided in particular by the Canadian International Development Agency through its International Humanitarian Assistance Programme, and by the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of the United States Agency for International Development. Regional Red Cross societies, as well as the community of non-governmental organizations, and in particular the Caribbean Conference of Churches, Caritas and Catholic Relief Services, have each played an important part in these activities.

The CARICOM member States reiterate the need for international humanitarian policies to emphasize and provide adequately for the continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development if long-term solutions are to be found. We are also convinced, from our own direct experience, that one of the priority objectives of these policies should be the decentralization of response strategies through the strengthening of institutional disaster-management capabilities at the local, national and subregional levels. This is the most effective way to guard against the creation of a syndrome of dependency on Northern expertise and management skills. The traditional knowledge and experiences of the populations and Governments in disaster-prone countries constitute a vital resource which must be more effectively developed and utilized.

Mr. Kudryavtsev (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): It is natural for humanitarian emergency assistance to have moved into the forefront of United Nations activities. First of all, the United Nations cannot remain aloof in the face of serious humanitarian crises — whose number, unfortunately, is by no means dropping.

Secondly, there are genuine advantages in having the United Nations carry out and coordinate such operations, which involve many parties: donor countries, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and, of course, the affected countries themselves. Coordination is necessary also to ensure effective utilization of the resources available for these purposes, which are growing in volume.

General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 48/57 and the conclusions agreed upon at the 1993 summer session of the Economic and Social Council have identified the main problem areas and a framework for joint action, including ensuring the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance, organizing efficient field coordination, establishing a rational division of labour and a close relationship among bilateral and multilateral donors, and

making use of flexible systems for financing humanitarian operations.

We are pleased to note that those decisions, and the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations (A/49/177 and Corr.1) are now gradually, but genuinely, being implemented. The work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has picked up speed and is growing more productive, thanks in large part to the dynamic personal efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Peter Hansen. Indeed, with respect to this sphere of the activities of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Hansen's Department in general appears to have got its second wind, as have the activities themselves.

The work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee is improving, but we need greater transparency in that work, for example through regular briefings on the results of the Standing Committee's meetings and of working meetings between representatives of the Committee and of interested States.

We must draw attention again to the longer-term tasks of the United Nations in this area mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General. They primarily involve further work on critically important issues such as protection of humanitarian mandates in conflict situations; ensuring unimpeded access to people in need; efficient demobilization and reintegration of former combatants into civilian life; facilitating the return of displaced persons; and de-mining. We are in favour of moving as quickly as possible to implement measures to resolve these problems.

Sometimes questions relating to unimpeded access for humanitarian emergency assistance get mixed up with sanctions introduced by the Security Council. We believe that the problem of the impact of sanctions on the civilian population deserves a thorough analysis. In this connection, we await with interest the report being prepared by the Inter-Agency Task Force which we believe should *inter alia* review the legal basis necessary for exempting from sanctions the most vulnerable groups in society. We think it important to establish a system for consultations which would make it possible to apprise the Security Council in good time of the humanitarian consequences of the introduction of sanctions. This would in itself ensure a more balanced approach to the introduction of phased lifting of sanctions where there are grounds for this. We believe that these considerations should be taken into account in the work of the relevant sanctions Committees of the Security Council, and indeed in the Security Council itself.

In general, it would seem to us that there is a need to draft a comprehensive international strategy for dealing with humanitarian crises, making use of work already done in this area, work that is reflected in the Agenda for Peace and also in the basic parameters of the Agenda for Development. Elements of such a strategy could include ensuring the delivery of humanitarian relief assistance in disaster areas before the deployment of the full-scale humanitarian operation; measures to house refugees and displaced persons; and reconstruction and rehabilitation within the context of ensuring long-term development — that is, the continuum aspect. In this connection, we could also look at the outcome of the Yokohama World Conference, which we are sure the General Assembly will endorse and support.

We hope that at this session new impetus will be given to another important initiative to step up the efforts of the United Nations to deal with humanitarian crises. I refer to Argentina's proposal to establish a network of national volunteers for rapid humanitarian response — the "white helmets". The Russian delegation is ready to promote a swift agreement on the basic parameters of this initiative and to work towards its practical implementation.

In this connection, of particular importance is the very recent decision by the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Yeltsin, to establish in Russia a national unit for emergency humanitarian response and an air and land mobile emergency reserve unit. These units would be intended for use within the country and also, by agreement with other countries and international organizations, beyond our borders.

Russia participates actively in international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance in emergency situations. The Russian federal budget for 1994 includes a special reserve of about $1.5 million for this purpose. In addition, this year the Government by special decision allocated about $15 million to buy and deliver humanitarian assistance for countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and other foreign countries. In 1994 Russia provided humanitarian assistance to the people of the Republics of the former Yugoslavia and to Tanzania and Rwanda in regions afflicted by bloody civil conflict. We also provided assistance to Moldova, Madagascar and China following natural disasters from which these countries suffered. We

are also actively involved in cooperating with agencies within the United Nations system in humanitarian operations in a number of countries of the trans-Caucasus and in Tajikistan.

The volume and level of Russia's involvement in humanitarian assistance makes our country one of the major donors in this area. This in turn explains our legitimate interest in participating in the relevant mechanisms both inside and outside the United Nations system.

Before concluding, I wish to say a few words about the work of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund. We support the views expressed by the Secretary-General in document A/49/177/Add.1 on enhancing the effectiveness of the functioning of the Fund and mobilizing the necessary resources. In this connection, I am particularly pleased to be able to say that the President of the Russian Federation has decided that Russia will contribute $250,000 to this Fund. In our continuing difficult internal economic circumstances, that is, I believe, further proof of Russia's commitment to cooperate in this important area of United Nations activities.

In concluding my statement I should like to express the hope that the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs will take account of the problems encountered in respect of consultations and in pursuance of the General Assembly resolution.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the Republic of Korea delegation, I should like to commend Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for their leadership role in providing a timely and effective response by the United Nations and the international community to natural and man-made disasters. We would also like to pay our highest respect to all the field personnel of relief agencies who have lost their lives while carrying out the task of humanitarian assistance.

Three years ago the General Assembly adopted its landmark resolution 46/182 to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations system in coordinating emergency humanitarian assistance. Since then the world has witnessed an alarming increase in humanitarian crises, which has significantly increased the demands placed upon the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to more than 30 million people world wide.

Mr. Ansari (India), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Regrettably, while natural disasters continue to threaten mankind, man-made disasters have dramatically increased and stand to thwart our efforts to ensure human security. For the millions of innocent people in such countries as Rwanda, the Sudan and Somalia, humanitarian assistance has literally become a matter of life and death. In particular, the catastrophic events that took place in Rwanda this year are among the greatest human tragedies in recent history.

Much of the credit for the success of humanitarian activities in such places as Somalia and the former Yugoslavia can be attributed to the strong coordinating role which the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has played as a focal point of the United Nations system. Therefore, my delegation is of the view that the leadership role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should be duly recognized and further strengthened in the future.

Indeed, good coordination is the key to achieving real results in humanitarian activities and must be maintained at and among the field, interdepartmental and interagency levels. In particular, coordination among the political, peace-keeping and humanitarian departments of the United Nations is crucial in conflict situations. Interdepartmental coordination must be enhanced so as to secure access to populations in need of assistance, improve the security of relief personnel and find a lasting solution to the root causes of many complex emergencies. In this context, my delegation welcomes and fully supports the coordination measures noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/49/177 and Corr.1 and Add.1).

It is now clear that in order to respond successfully to man-made disasters the United Nations must actively take preventive and preparatory measures, such as preventive diplomacy and contingency planning. This is also true for natural disasters, as reflected in the Yokohama Message, adopted at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction held last May. Considering the fact that these measures can be taken only through the establishment of a reliable early-warning system, the delegation of the Republic of Korea would like to commend the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for initiating the International Emergency Readiness and Response Information System and for working to establish a Humanitarian Early Warning System. In addition, my delegation would like to emphasize that the strengthening of regional early-warning networks should be duly considered. Building such networks, particularly

in vulnerable regions, would significantly enhance the United Nations capacity to cope with emergencies.

Just as it is crucial to enhance those measures, it is also crucial that the United Nations, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP, in particular, plan and implement their relief activities in the context of a continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development. Only with such a continuum of action can the affected countries develop successfully into more stable societies and achieve sustainable development, which is a key to ensuring international peace and security.

In the light of the increasing number and magnitude of disasters, it is imperative to have a sound financial system and strategy. In order to respond promptly and effectively to humanitarian crises, particularly at the early stage of emergencies, the relief agencies must have adequate financial resources available. In this regard, my delegation supports the recommendation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) should be expanded and that the donor base should be broadened through embracing new partners. It is crucial that all members of the global family contribute to this noble cause in a spirit of cooperation and genuine partnership.

Another financial mechanism, the consolidated appeal process, also merits our attention. My delegation considers the consolidated appeal process to be, not only a valuable financial mechanism, but also an important instrument for coordination among relief agencies and recipient countries. And, considering the importance of this mechanism for the humanitarian activities of the United Nations, my delegation wishes to emphasize the responsibility of donors to respond to appeals and fulfil their commitments promptly and in full.

Finally, in view of the dangerous and unstable situation in which relief personnel often carry our their duties, my delegation would like to emphasize once again the importance of ensuring the safety of those courageous men and women; we call for strengthened legal and other necessary measures to ensure their protection.

Mr. Thahim (Pakistan): The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has the most challenging task of dealing with a plethora of emergencies: both man-made and natural disasters. The demands are many and the resources limited. Within its limited resources, the Department has been able reach out and to provide assistance in hot-spots and disaster-ravaged areas all over the world. Since the Department of Humanitarian Affairs represents one of the most visible arms of the United Nations, it is subject to media attention and is therefore vulnerable.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Peter Hansen, for his personal commitment to the tasks given to his Department. We have known Mr. Hansen over the years for his energy, innovative spirit and ability to deliver. We are confident that his forthright manner will help the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in fulfilling the role envisaged for it in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

The proliferation of emergencies over the past few years, especially man-made disasters caused by civil strife, underscores the importance of the role the United Nations must play in preventive diplomacy and socio-economic development. We are convinced that some of the present-day disasters could have been averted if there had been a greater resort to the instruments of negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and judicial settlement as per Chapter VI of the Charter. Undoubtedly the United Nations faces a crisis of excessive expectations, but it is the only organization that can offer hope to nations and peoples locked in strife and overcome by turmoil. And it must again be emphasized that it is through sincere implementation of the decisions of the United Nations that we can expect, in the words of the Charter, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and thus fulfil the purposes for which the United Nations was established.

The chaos and turmoil which have affected so many parts of the developing world in recent years also underline the vital importance of promoting economic and social development as a means of averting humanitarian emergencies and of overcoming such calamities when they happen. Without development, there is a danger that civil order and peace will disappear in many parts of the world. Without development, many of the current emergencies may become even more prolonged and cruel.

The dire need behind the creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was to ensure the coordination of assistance provided by all organizations involved in emergencies. The Department's activities are being undertaken in conformity with the Guiding Principles contained in the annex to resolution 46/182. The coordination role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in complex emergencies, as approved by the

Inter-Agency Standing Committee through the establishment of disaster-management teams and a clear division of labour, will ensure that the United Nations is able to fulfil its role of immediate response.

It is recognized that while resolution 46/182 delegates to the Resident Coordinator the coordination of humanitarian assistance activities, there is a need for humanitarian assistance coordinators in some complex emergency situations. The leadership provided by such coordinators in emergencies in the recent past has proved to be extremely effective. The decisions of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the designation of humanitarian assistance coordinators should be limited to situations in which the Resident Coordinator is not in place or in which the magnitude of the emergency requires some special expertise or the political acumen of an especially designated senior official.

Since its launching, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund has been a vital mechanism for the provision of immediate financial assistance for emergencies pending the preparation of a consolidated appeal and the response to it. It is therefore essential that the Fund continue to receive contributions and retain its revolving nature. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs should be allowed complete flexibility in the disbursement of the Fund's resources for effective damage-control in the first 48 hours of an emergency, the time when most lives are lost. While the usefulness of the Fund is recognized, it is disconcerting that, despite all the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, it has been unable to increase the overall levels of resources of the Fund to meet the increasing demands of new emergencies. We support the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report for an increase in the size of the Fund and urge all donors to contribute to it.

With regard to item 37 (b), my delegation notes with appreciation the efforts made by the Secretary-General towards the implementation of resolution 48/208, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan". The special mission led by Ambassador Mahmoud Mestiri deserves our congratulations for its work. The report of the special mission gives important insight into the situation prevailing in Afghanistan.

The destruction in Afghanistan caused by 14 years of a cruel war and by the intensification of the fighting in Kabul and elsewhere in the country since January 1994 is difficult to imagine. Of a population of 15 million, over 6 million fled the country during the war and sought refuge mainly in Iran, Pakistan and other parts of the world. A further 2.5 million were internally displaced. Over 1 million men and 250,000 women and children died in the war. At present, nearly 200,000 people are internally displaced in camps near Jalalabad, bracing for a severe winter. The magnitude of this human suffering is without precedent.

Now that the foreign occupants have left, it is regrettable that the world's attention seems to be turned elsewhere. It has been left to the brave people of Afghanistan to address the task of rehabilitation and national reconstruction. This task is monumental. The special mission found a strong feeling among Afghans that:

> "the international community and the United Nations had deserted Afghanistan for the past two years." *(A/49/208, para. 23 (g))*

The report of the special mission points out that the effect of the war can be felt throughout the country, with instability spreading to various regions. The social fabric and economic life of Afghanistan have been devastated; institutions and physical infrastructure have been completely destroyed. Health, education and other services are virtually inoperative. Unemployment, poverty, deprivation and disease afflict most of Afghanistan's people, of whom 15 per cent are either displaced, homeless or destitute in the middle of a long and difficult winter.

The presence of land-mines has been indicated as one of the major obstacles to the successful repatriation of the Afghan refugees. Nearly 400,000 people have been disabled, mainly by land-mines, 10 million of which have reportedly been laid in Afghanistan. The effect of these mines on the civilian population, especially on small children, is heart-rending. The mine-clearance programme of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is therefore of critical importance not only to the personal security of the Afghan returnees, but also to the rapid return of refugees and the revival of local economies in Afghanistan. We would urge the donor community to contribute generously to this programme.

It is evident from the consolidated appeal launched by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs a few weeks ago that there is an urgent need for humanitarian rehabilitation assistance to Afghanistan. The nations of the world invested heavily in the long and bloody conflict

in Afghanistan. The outcome of this war was heralded as a triumph for the "free world". It would be tragic if the Afghan nation, battered and destroyed, were now left to fend for itself. The world community is morally obligated to respond with generosity to the plight of Afghanistan.

Pakistan sincerely hopes that the international community will respond in a swift and decisive manner to the consolidated appeal. The world cannot watch with folded hands the suffering and devastation of Afghanistan. The peoples of the world must display solidarity with the brave people of Afghanistan as they struggle to heal the wounds of a most devastating war.

Mr. Bull (Liberia): I should like, on behalf of the Liberian delegation, to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed report (A/49/177) on the activities of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. I also welcome his report in document A/49/177/Add.1 of 1 November 1994, which was submitted pursuant to the General Assembly's request to him to provide recommendations for the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster-relief assistance of the United Nations.

Since the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was established, it has continued to play a significant role in coordinating the delivery of emergency assistance to peoples in difficult circumstances worldwide, particularly the innocent victims of civil conflicts and other disasters. The growing collaboration between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations agencies and international organizations has improved the efficiency of the United Nations in responding to humanitarian emergencies. I should therefore like to congratulate Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen and members of his staff on this important achievement. The further implementation of recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report to which I have referred should prove to be most helpful and deserves the General Assembly's endorsement.

It is a matter of growing concern that a substantial portion of United Nations resources is being utilized not to further development and cooperation among Member States, as envisaged in the United Nations Charter, but, rather, to finance peace-keeping operations and to address humanitarian emergencies, many of which result from civil conflicts.

As the United Nations approaches its half-century of existence, collective action must be taken to reverse this trend, which poses a serious threat to a more peaceful world order. In this regard, it is perhaps only when collective action is taken to impose some penalties that the perpetrators of man-made disasters and other conflicts will be deterred from such activities, which, as a moral imperative, have continued to claim the attention of the United Nations.

For nearly five years now the people of Liberia have been forced against their will to live in deprivation and fear as a result of a senseless war. In spite of the people's desire to live in peace and rebuild their lives, the warring factions, particularly their warlords, with the support of some external forces, persist in their efforts to achieve political power by force of arms. The war has destroyed the country's basic infrastructure, displaced over 1 million inhabitants internally and forced over 700,000 to become refugees in neighbouring countries.

The Secretary-General's report in document A/49/466 of 7 October 1994, "Assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia," is therefore timely. The report provides a comprehensive assessment of the civil crisis, the various peace initiatives and the efforts of the United Nations to respond to the humanitarian needs arising from the devastating war. It also identifies areas in which the international community could be helpful by complementing the national efforts to undertake the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country when the guns are silenced.

In recognition of the fact that a political settlement offers the only durable solution to the conflict, the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States, the President of Ghana, convened another meeting two days ago in Accra to narrow the differences among the warring factions. It is to be hoped that the full participation of the National Transitional Government and other concerned groups will facilitate an agreement acceptable to all sides. The parties to the conflict must realize the futility of pursuing the use of force to achieve political ends and must accede to the wishes of the Liberian people to be allowed freely to elect their leaders. They must also realize that the goodwill and support of our African brothers, as well as of the international community, are not unlimited. Liberians must accept the reality that the future course our country takes will be determined by us.

A detailed plan for the reconstruction of Liberia is being prepared by the Liberian authorities which will outline the development goals and objectives and identify priority programmes requiring the assistance of donors. In the meantime, contributions to the Trust Fund for

Liberia are urgently required to enable the Economic Community of West African States to fulfil its mandate and to maintain troops provided by the Organization of African Unity.

The repatriation of Liberian refugees, the demobilization and rehabilitation of combatants and preparations for the holding of general and presidential elections are some of the priorities outlined in the draft resolution on Liberia (A/49/L.32), which was introduced this morning by the representative of Ghana in his capacity as Chairman of the African Group for the month of November. I wish to join him in requesting that the Assembly adopt the draft resolution unanimously. Its full implementation will ensure a more hopeful future for the people of Liberia.

May I take this opportunity to express the grateful appreciation of the people of Liberia for the cooperation and assistance the United Nations and friendly Governments and governmental and non-governmental organizations have continued to provide us as we seek a peaceful resolution of our conflict.

We commend the efforts of the United Nations to strengthen its coordination and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, which reaffirm our faith in the commitment of the Organization to promote and protect the welfare of all peoples in recognition of our common humanity.

Mr. Marrero (United States of America): We welcome the opportunity today to address the General Assembly on the all-too-timely subject of humanitarian assistance.

Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182, the international community has faced over 100 sudden natural disasters and over 25 complex socio-political emergencies. Tragically, a combination of man-made and natural disasters has created unprecedented demand for help by the United Nations in responding to humanitarian crises. Although there is much for the General Assembly and the United Nations as a whole to be proud of, there is also a pressing need for us to plan together to meet future challenges with greater efficiency and success.

There is an increasing linkage between peace-keeping and humanitarian operations. Purely humanitarian missions are declining in frequency. Rarer still are the peace-keeping missions that do not have humanitarian implications. Today, when one thinks of the provision of United Nations humanitarian assistance one thinks of sending caravans of food through hostile roadblocks, flying medical supplies within range of enemy guns, or negotiating day by day for the right simply to save human lives.

It is no secret that the stabilizing and paralysing effects of the cold war have worn off, and pent-up pressures from past grievances have erupted, causing civil conflicts and strife of an alarming nature. Increasingly, the international community — many of us sitting in this very Hall today — has asked the United Nations to care for the victims. Thus, the demand for humanitarian assistance has grown many-fold, while the costs and complexities of providing assistance effectively have grown even more.

My Government's policy begins with the premise that we cannot and shall not remain aloof in the face of human suffering and despair. Indeed, we who sit here today have an obligation to ourselves and to our shared ideals as Members of the United Nations to do all we can to alleviate the pain of the desperate and the displaced. We also begin with the optimistic understanding that for every current crisis there is another crisis on the verge of being solved.

For example, the United Nations inter-agency appeal for Haiti, which is to be released soon, comprises projects and activities that will help Haitians to build an economically, politically and environmentally viable nation so that never again will they be driven to seek their future elsewhere. The Economic Emergency Relief Programme — a joint reconstruction and rehabilitation effort to be launched early next year by the United Nations Development Programme, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and USAID — is a logical extension of this appeal. Together, they address the important relief-to-development continuum that we all too often call for but seldom realize.

The experience of the last two years in responding to these emergencies has demonstrated the validity of resolution 46/182 in providing the framework for the coordination of United Nations relief assistance. Despite the fact that its resources have been spread thin by the growing wave of humanitarian emergencies, the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs has played a vital role in coordinating relief assistance worldwide. In particular, the United States recognizes the strong leadership of Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen and

the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, in responding to the crisis in Rwanda.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has coalesced into an effective and purposeful coordinating forum. The parties that participate in the Standing Committee have developed an understanding that it is up to them to work together to help solve the crises that so many of us may feel are unsolvable.

We cannot, however, as Governments, profess that we have all the answers. The problems we face demand a supreme effort of partnership between Governments, United Nations agencies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. This partnership must be multilateral in character — involving Governments in the affected regions as well as donors; local as well as international non-governmental organizations; and multilateral organizations at both the global and the regional levels.

The Central Emergency Revolving Fund has provided critical and necessary start-up funding to the relief agencies, and rapid response coordination capability to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Yet, further information on how those funds are used is sorely required if we are to convince ourselves of the need to expand the Central Emergency Revolving Fund. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in preparing consolidated appeals, should highlight the funds borrowed by the relevant agencies and should indicate which activities those funds supported. It should also emphasize the importance of reimbursing the Central Emergency Revolving Fund so that adequate funds are always available to respond to future emergencies.

We must not lose sight of the revolving nature of Central Emergency Revolving Fund expenditures or of the initial emergency needs that those expenditures support and the likelihood that donors will see the benefit of funding such activities when responding to appeals.

Member States must recognize that coordination activities are essential to the effective and comprehensive use of broader humanitarian assistance. We believe that a consistent source of funding for rapid-response coordination is not just desirable but necessary. We therefore strongly endorse the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for the continued use by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the interest earned by the Central Emergency Revolving Fund for funding rapid coordination arrangements in the field. We also welcome the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs in consulting with Member States on how to broaden the donor base. Such efforts should be supported and expanded.

We applaud the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for its work to ensure that the Emergency Relief Coordinator's designation or appointment of the humanitarian assistance coordinators is transparent and consistent with the spirit of General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 47/199. The need for swift and effective coordination at the field level requires nothing less.

Given this grave need and the scarcity of resources for field coordination, we must make certain that each dollar available is spent wisely and efficiently and in a coordinated and coherent manner. Unfortunately, wisdom, efficiency, coordination and coherence do not come about by accident. Effective and sustainable humanitarian assistance requires careful planning and consideration by all the players in the United Nations system. We have to pull together, not only to respond to emergencies but also to plan for them, prevent them, contain them and end them.

For this to happen, we have to adapt our institutions and procedures to the world as we find it today. And what we find is that the world does not conform to any bureaucratic structure or organizational chart. Today, crises that can be categorized solely as humanitarian or military or political are very rare. As a result, planning for humanitarian aid must include full consideration of security and other factors that may come into play when attempts to deliver aid are made.

At the same time, planning for peace-keeping and other security-related missions must take into account the humanitarian dimension. Turmoil and violence create refugees, cripple children, destroy villages and disrupt normal economic activity. This means that we must approach all these problems on an integrated basis. We must involve the Department of Humanitarian Affairs more closely in the planning of peace-keeping operations. Under-Secretary-General Hansen's recent reorganization of the Department addresses this challenge. We must support him in his efforts to further develop and strengthen the cooperation and coordination between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs.

Just as an integrated approach to crisis areas is important, so too is early intervention. Given the human stakes, it should be obvious that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. In many cases, if we had only acted sooner, with a little more foresight and greater urgency, we could have saved many lives, avoided innumerable hardships and redirected millions of dollars to prevent or mitigate other disasters.

While preventive diplomacy is not always possible when it comes to foreseeable natural disasters we have the collective capacity to intervene early and to affect the result. That is why my Government is proud to announce the recent contribution of $100,000 to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. This contribution will support the global implementation of the Plan of Action adopted at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, which was held in Yokohama, Japan, last May. The Plan of Action is an important instrument as a means of enabling national Governments to incorporate disaster-reduction programmes into their development and environmental planning.

It is easy, of course, to talk about the importance of looking ahead, but it is not always easy to act. The urgent has a tendency to drive out the important, but given the scarcity of resources, we must do everything we can to find the resources and the wisdom to keep today's problems from becoming tomorrow's crises. But how do we do this? What does preventive diplomacy mean in this context?

The United Nations and all its agencies must be willing and able to pool data to provide early warning of an impending crisis. The United Nations response to the Southern African Drought Emergency (SADE) in 1992 was an example of how this process can work. Although this was a response to a natural disaster, there are lessons in it as to how the United Nations can — and must — deal with disasters of both the natural and the man-made variety. Let me remind those present today of the four essential ingredients: first, an integrated approach; secondly, an information system that can provide early warnings; thirdly, a rapid response; and fourthly, a high degree of coordination and competence among all the United Nations agencies and departments involved. Of these, a rapid response is the most difficult to achieve, since it requires not only a commitment of resources, but the political will to act.

Let me again turn for a moment to focus on the tragedy in Rwanda. The international community has undertaken a massive humanitarian relief effort to address the immense human suffering brought about by the crisis in Rwanda. However, enormous effort is still required on several fronts to stabilize the situation and help promote conditions that will encourage refugee repatriation, national reconciliation, and lasting peace.

While the war in Rwanda may be over, the underlying turmoil is not: two million refugees remain outside the country, with hundreds of thousands more displaced internally. Extremist militias are fomenting violence in the camps and intimidating refugees who wish to be repatriated.

In these circumstances, the international community's first priorities should be to ensure that fighting and wide-spread violence are not resumed, and that conditions are created inside Rwanda which set the stage for an overall reconciliation. We need to improve security and stability inside Rwanda, through more effective deployment of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) and accelerated deployment of human rights monitors. We need to enhance security in the camps outside Rwanda. We need to identify and punish the planners and perpetrators of the acts of genocide, through expedited action by the International Tribunal.

We need to help improve conditions inside Rwanda through assistance to the new government to allow it to function, restore basic services, and restart the judicial processes. We need to ensure that the new government makes good on its promise to uphold the basic principles of the Arusha peace agreements: power sharing, an integrated security force, and respect for human rights. These goals need to be pursued from a regional perspective, with the active involvement of Rwanda's neighbours. This is indeed an ambitious endeavour, one that can succeed only through sustained, coordinated support by the international community.

In closing, I want to emphasize the importance of the work that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations as a whole do to help people in desperate need. Behind the statistics of missions conducted, dollars contributed, and tons of supplies delivered, there is the human reality of lives saved, children fed, and hopes reborn. Because so many humanitarian missions now have a political dimension and because of the terrible frustrations experienced in some areas, it is useful to reaffirm the principle that once the United Nations has authorized the delivery of

humanitarian aid, no power on Earth has the right to prevent its delivery. Summoning the will and the power to enforce that principle is a challenge and responsibility for us all.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on Mr. Mario Lander, President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Lander (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have the honour and pleasure of thanking all the States represented here who joined in granting our 163-member International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies the status of Permanent Observer in this forum of nations.

I wish to express the pleasure and the pride of the International Federation as it assumes its role in the General Assembly as Permanent Observer. The granting of this status is for us a high privilege. We commit ourselves to expressing only the most carefully considered, responsible views and to undertaking a thoughtful examination of issues relating to humanitarian service, on the basis of our operational experience as the world's largest humanitarian service network. We desire, in the phrase of the current time, to add value to the proceedings of the General Assembly, and we hope that our relationship will always be one of colleagues in search of the best, most practical and most creative solutions to humanitarian service needs.

With regard now to the matter before the General Assembly, agenda item 37 (*a*), we are generally supportive of the report (A/49/177 and Add.1) on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations. I would, however, add a few thoughts on the general topic of the coordination of humanitarian action in disaster situations, both man-made and natural.

Responding to disasters today poses many problems for operational agencies such as the International Federation. In many areas, the principle of humanitarianism is gradually being eroded. Agencies that act to alleviate suffering whenever and wherever it is found often find themselves doing so in a political vacuum. We are addressing the effects of disaster, but often the causes remain unresolved. Humanitarian aid cannot be a substitute for peacemaking and peace-keeping. In developing strategies to address complex disasters, the political and military dimensions must be addressed in parallel with the humanitarian one, while at the same time a clear distinction must be maintained on the ground between humanitarian action and other actions taken by the international community — a difficult but necessary balancing act.

Moreover, today's disasters no longer present a simple picture of innocent suffering and simple causes. The need to address human- rights issues, both past and present, sits uneasily beside the need to provide for essential life-support services. At the same time as disaster response is becoming more complex, it is being played out on an increasingly public stage, with ramifications for the quality of the delivery of services and for funding support.

In seeking to play an honest and effective role in close cooperation with other operational agencies, we have become convinced over the past 75 years that, more than ever before, humanitarian agencies must think through and then apply the implications of truly acting in a neutral, independent and impartial fashion. Clarity of purpose and action is a key principle in allowing agencies to steer through the political minefields of today's complex disasters.

It is for this reason that the International Federation, in collaboration with its colleague organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and six leading international non-governmental organization coalitions, has developed and put into practice a code of conduct for relief agencies. This code lays down for the first time a set of ethical and behavioural standards to which all international disaster response organizations can and should commit themselves. I believe that setting and attaining agreed standards of excellence in our chosen profession is one of the most effective ways of enhancing the coordination of agencies.

While coordination is an essential component of improving disaster response, it must be complemented by a better understanding of what this means in practice. Our experience, particularly in the recent high-profile disasters of Somalia, Liberia and Rwanda, strengthens our conviction that the way in which agencies deliver assistance is as important as what they deliver.

The serious security problems in disaster situations, particularly those involving large numbers of displaced persons or refugees, is a case in point. The Secretary-General has addressed himself to this situation eloquently.

Just as humanitarian assistance has had to develop a range of specialized tools to do its work, so, too, must peace-keeping. One such tool could be a police force specifically to provide security in camps for refugees and displaced persons where the well-being of the camps' inhabitants is threatened. The lack of security in places such as the former Yugoslavia and Somalia is well known, but the situation is endemic in many areas where humanitarian assistance is being given. It is currently particularly serious in many of the Rwandese refugee camps, in some of which bands of ex-soldiers are in effect holding the refugees hostage.

Our Red Cross/Red Crescent camps in Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire, where we are caring for more than 800,000 refugees, have so far largely escaped such situations. We believe that this is because of the way in which we work through local bodies and to a long-term agenda. But the situation could change overnight. After all our people working in the camps, are specialists in humanitarian service, not policemen. Identical security problems affect humanitarian relief efforts in places as widely separated as Afghanistan, Georgia, Kenya, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

We are firmly committed to advocating and defending humanitarian principles, not just because they are important, but because we are in the privileged position of being able to work directly with some 19 million disaster victims worldwide. This privilege not only entitles us, but obliges us, to speak up in defence of the principles of humanity, an obligation that I hope we can meet here in the Assembly.

In this context, I should like to highlight the problem of "popular" disasters, those which receive plenty of media coverage and adequate funding. But there are other disasters whose victims suffer no less for being overlooked, neglected and forgotten. We must find ways of assisting all disaster victims equally, regardless of the interest taken in them by the media or the public.

Similarly, we must find better ways of drawing attention to the need to prevent suffering, and apply funds for that purpose, rather than simply deal with the aftermath of a disaster. Disaster preparedness and capacity-building of local institutions have been sorely neglected in recent years, except in rhetoric. Relief spending as a percentage of official development assistance has skyrocketed, diverting funds intended for the less immediate, but more basic, needs of preparedness.

Before concluding, I should like to say that we in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are very proud to share this forum with our colleagues from the International Committee of the Red Cross. Although independent organizations, we intend to speak as much as possible with one voice on humanitarian service issues, clearly and responsibly, on behalf of the most vulnerable and suffering people of the world.

I repeat that we are very proud to join those who are permitted to contribute to the deliberations of this important Assembly.

The President: Before adjourning the meeting, I should like to inform members that, due to the lateness of the hour, the remaining speakers scheduled for this afternoon will be heard on Friday, 25 November 1994, in the morning.

I wish everyone a happy and safe Thanksgiving holiday.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.